

The Water Shortage Program was developed for two phases: Water Shortage Watch and Water Shortage Warning.

When conditions are appropriate, the Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet is responsible for announcing a Water Shortage Watch. At that time, local government officials and water utility managers are responsible for determining the need for local response and for making preparations for water shortages. The Water Shortage Response Plan provides details on specific recommended response measures. The cabinet must be kept informed of all shortages and actions taken in response to those shortages so it can determine when to lift the watch or to issue a Water Shortage Warning.

The cabinet will announce a Water Shortage Warning when one or more water supply systems in an area have entered the emergency phase of water shortage as detailed in the Water Shortage Response Plan document. Local governments and water utility managers should have adopted water shortage response mechanisms and most systems should then be in some phase of response to the shortage. The cabinet must be kept informed of all shortages and actions taken in response to those shortages so that it can determine when to announce a warning for other similar systems or to lift the warning.

Local Responsibilities. The basic premise of the Water Shortage Response Plan is that water shortages can be most effectively addressed at the local level. Therefore, the plan emphasizes that local officials and the local community act expeditiously and appropriately when a water shortage appears imminent. Local officials must monitor local conditions, organize the resources of their community and take necessary action.

The Water Shortage Response Plan document provides local actions necessary to prepare for and respond to different degrees of water shortage severity. It gives specific guidelines for assessing local conditions and taking appropriate action. It gives conservation advice on individual use habits and water-saving devices. The appendices include ample press releases and ordinances to help local residents reach their conservation goals.

State Responsibilities. The cabinet monitors water supply conditions on a continuing basis and keeps in continual contact with state and federal agencies that have information or can provide advice upon which a determination can be made regarding the potential for water supply shortage. When conditions exist that can lead to a water supply shortage in any area of the state, the cabinet will issue the appropriate notifications.

The cabinet is also charged with providing technical assistance to local agencies in developing community-specific water shortage preparedness and response plans. The Water Shortage Response Plan document provides much of the information that local communities require in developing their own site-specific plans. However, the cabinet also provides more detailed information upon request.

If the severity of water shortage exceeds the ability of the community to respond or if the response by a community is inadequate, the state has the authority to suspend all permits and exemptions in the impacted area and to allocate the available water among users.

If a water supply shortage becomes critical or if the supply is exhausted, the governor may declare a water emergency. Under these circumstances, the Kentucky Division of Disaster and Emergency Services will provide whatever assistance is available. This may range from hauling water to installing pumps and water lines to connect the water supplier to another source of water, if one exists. All such services are provided on a cost-reimbursement basis.